



# Evaluation of Media Services to Children and Young People in Schools

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## RECENT TRENDS IN THE EVALUATION OF EDUCATION

MEDIA SPECIALISTS in schools have had contact with evaluation and its instruments for many years—the required reports of state departments of education; the reports, used in accreditation surveys such as the *Evaluative Criteria* of the National Study of Secondary School Evaluation;<sup>1</sup> special evaluations such as that generated by *A Planning Guide for the High School Library Program* by Henne, *et al.*,<sup>2</sup> and the Consensus Study Inventories of the Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program.<sup>3</sup>

Most of these instruments ascertained, in quantitative terms, existing provisions in materials, staff, services and expenditures, and a few included measurers of quality based largely on empirical judgment. However, they were—and still are—important in establishing base-line data for measurement and comparison, and in structuring and establishing both quantitative and qualitative standards. No evaluation of the present has validity without the foundation of reliable data and statistical norms derived from aggregated data.

However, in the past ten years, under the leadership of men like R.W. Tyler, Daniel Stufflebeam, Robert Stake and Egon Guba, the process of evaluation of education has become more highly developed and has evolved into an applied science. Stufflebeam has said, "Evaluation is defined . . . as the process of acquiring and using information for making decisions associated with planning, programming, implementing, and recycling program activities."<sup>4</sup>

Evaluation now goes beyond the traditional approach of rating exist-

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ing conditions (in the form of data) on some outside norm or standard, and instead determines the extent to which internal objectives are met and through what means. Today's evaluation measures *impact*, going beyond the status quo.

It follows, then, that in any evaluation project concerned with media services in schools, the first step must be to determine the objectives of the media program in the school, and to establish agreement on these objectives by school staff—the principal, curriculum directors, teachers and media specialists. Outside consultants in evaluation cannot help much in that process, because it relates intrinsically to the school's program, but they can assist in structuring the questions relating to the objectives which should be tested or measured. And they can help in the process of determining the form of the survey for maximum effectiveness.

An evaluation which determines impact with validity can be used as the basis for decision-making, and can assist in planning various components of a media program as well as the total program. To illustrate: a school faculty may wish to test the value of scheduled formalized library instruction. When the objectives of such a program have been agreed upon, and the questions to be asked are decided, the impact ascertained in the evaluation process can be a reliable basis for a decision on the continuation, or termination, of this type of instruction.

Impact can be measured in a variety of ways: through standardized tests, planned interviews, questionnaires, observation, or a combination of these methods. No one method is necessarily the only one, or the best. The adaptability of the measure to the question, however, does require careful thought, and sometimes expert advice.

Of utmost importance is the evaluation design. Even for a very modest evaluative survey, a plan must be developed which includes objectives to be tested, data to be collected, measures to be used, data analysis methods, and type of report. For more complex evaluations, the techniques of design employed by experienced evaluators must be studied, such as the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model devised by Stufflebeam.

For the total evaluation process there are a number of helpful guides in the literature of educational evaluation. A monograph, *Evaluation: The Process of Stimulating, Aiding, and Abetting Insightful Action* by Guba and Stufflebeam, is an excellent introduction to the subject.<sup>5</sup> Popham's *An Evaluation Guidebook*<sup>6</sup> is also useful.

For preparing reports of evaluation, *Preparing Evaluation Reports; A Guide for Authors*<sup>7</sup> published by the U.S. Office of Education is a clearly

written presentation on the subject. It contains an excellent bibliography of materials on research methodology and experimental design, sampling measurement, and data analysis and processing. Books listed are arranged by level of difficulty.

EVALUATION OF TITLE II OF THE ELEMENTARY  
AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT,  
SCHOOL LIBRARY RESOURCES, TEXTBOOKS, AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL  
MATERIALS

Since the techniques of evaluation have developed into a highly sophisticated discipline, it may be helpful to school media specialists, teachers and administrators to know how we in the U.S. Office of Education approached the evaluation of Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, School Library Resources, Textbooks, and Other Instructional Materials. Those immediately assigned to the administration of ESEA Title II were school media specialists, not experts in evaluation, and it was essential for us to have the guidance and assistance of specialists in that field. This support is needed in any evaluation project of dimension; however, some of the mystique surrounding the techniques of assessment can be dispelled by the application of common sense.

From the very beginning, we decided that we must not only have expert advice, but also do very careful planning of the objectives and direction of the evaluation. We began our evaluation program by holding a small exploratory conference consisting of state and Office of Education staff. The state staff included ten coordinators of ESEA Title II in state departments of education; the Office of Education staff was composed of seven media staff assigned to the administration of ESEA Title II, three specialists in program evaluation, and four specialists in statistical analysis.

Our evaluation experts taught us that evaluation is a process for making and supporting decisions. We had been operating on the assumption that the provision and utilization of high quality instructional materials are good; our evaluation could tell us whether this was a valid assumption, and direct us to sound decisions for the future.

The first two days of the conference were devoted to presentations and discussions of ESEA Title II program purposes and achievements; the conference objectives; and identification of information requirements. We sought by these means to arrive at a common understanding of ESEA Title II, its objectives and expected outcomes. Then, in groups, we decided on the questions we would like answered in the

evaluation of Title II, and the purpose these answers might serve; we decided which questions should have the highest priority in measuring impact; we also made preliminary decisions on the methods by which the data should be collected. In all of these deliberations our evaluation experts advised us on the feasibility of questions we wanted answered, and on the possibilities of arriving at credible answers through reputable techniques of evaluation. Our specialists in statistical analysis also advised us on the data we were collecting on annual report forms, and on possible changes in these forms.

We arrived at the following recommendations:

1. The major broad aspects of the program to be evaluated were: (a) the effect of increased instructional materials on the improvement of instruction; and (b) the effect of increased instructional materials on pupil achievement.
2. Other elements of the Title II program which required evaluation as a part of determining larger outcomes were: (a) changing attitudes of administrators, teachers, media specialists, pupils and parents toward the utilization of a broad variety of instructional materials; (b) changing programs of service by instructional materials centers to curriculum and instruction; (c) the quantity, variety and quality of materials acquired in relation to instructional needs; (d) changing methods of utilization of materials by teachers and pupils; (e) effectiveness of the administration of instructional materials, including methods for making materials accessible; (f) adequacy of the provision of professional and clerical staff for programs of service with instructional materials; and (g) the effect of the increase of materials on the improvement of the physical environment of the materials center and other instructional areas of the school.
3. The Office of Education should conduct evaluative studies examining the elements outlined in 2 above through case studies in: (a) schools with special purpose grants for demonstration; and (b) schools with libraries which had none prior to the Title II program.
4. The Office of Education, in cooperation with state departments of education, should develop an instrument for the collection of essential quantitative data by the states. There should be a subsequent Office of Education conference of state department of education personnel for the purpose of obtaining understanding of an agreement on the instrument and its use.
5. The annual report forms should be re-examined for possible deletions or substitutions.

The recommendations for the structure of the evaluation in numbers 3 and 4 above were implemented, except that the overall evaluation recommended in 4 was not done by the states, but by the U.S. Office of Education, and included qualitative as well as quantitative data. The major aspects of the program recommended in number 1 were included in the studies, as well as the other elements recommended in 2. Obviously, this preliminary conference had a high degree of influence on the conduct of the Title II evaluation. Its effectiveness can probably be attributed to a number of elements: the combination of media and evaluation specialists at the very first stage of planning; its workable size; the fact that five full days were given to the deliberations; and the careful documentation of the proceedings and recommendations for follow-up activities.

The conduct of the three parts of the evaluation took a great deal of time and effort. The case studies, for which consultants in evaluation and media were employed, required two years for completion and publication. The national survey was directed by the planning and evaluation staff of the Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, and required a national conference and a series of regional conferences with evaluation staff from state departments of education and local school districts on the scope of the study and the survey instruments. The collection, editing, processing and interpretation of the data proved to be highly complex tasks, and the report was not made available until 1972.

The reports of the Title II evaluation are:

*Emphasis on Excellence in School Media Programs: Descriptive Case Studies, Special-Purpose Grant Programs. Title II Elementary and Secondary Education Act. School Library Resources, Textbooks, and Other Instructional Materials.*<sup>8</sup> Case studies of the outcomes of ESEA Title II in three elementary schools, two junior high schools, one middle school and two high schools which received special purpose grants.

*Descriptive Case Studies of Nine Elementary School Media Centers in Three Inner Cities: Title II Elementary and Secondary Education Act . . . School Library Resources, Textbooks, and Other Printed and Published Instructional Materials.*<sup>9</sup> Case studies of the effects of ESEA Title II in nine elementary school media centers in Buffalo, Cleveland and Los Angeles.

*An Evaluation Survey Report on ESEA Title II—Fiscal Year 1966-68. Part I. Analysis and Interpretation. Part II. Tables, 1972.*<sup>10</sup> A report of a comprehensive survey of the impact of ESEA Title II conducted through a sample of school districts in the United States. Includes the survey instruments.

For media specialists in schools considering a media program evaluation, the case studies have the greater relevance. They can help to identify elements of programs to be studied, to develop interview instruments, and to tabulate and report data. These case studies illustrate well the techniques of quantifying subjective data from interviews with principals, teachers, pupils, and parents. Indeed, they also point to the fact that a child's spontaneous opinions of a book, a film strip or a media center may have greater validity than quantified data. The comprehensive survey can be useful to state departments of education, large districts, or institutions and organizations designing surveys of broader scope.

#### EVALUATION OF MEDIA SERVICES IN LOCAL SCHOOLS

Evaluation of media services is taking place in many schools throughout the United States. The evaluation component built into innovative projects under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and other federal programs, the new emphasis on accountability, and the heightened interest of the whole education community in measuring the effectiveness of programs have greatly stimulated the evaluation of media services.

A publication of the U.S. Office of Education, *ESEA Title II and the Right to Read, Notable Reading Projects*,<sup>11</sup> is an example of this prevalence of evaluation of media programs. It is a periodical compilation of descriptions of reading projects supported by Title II of the ESEA. Each project description includes the plan of evaluation, as well as the objectives, design, number of pupils served, amount and source of funds, and official to be contacted in the school for further information. To date about 215 projects from 40 states have been so described. Below is an example of one of these projects:

*Title:* Language Skill Development, Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, Lowell, Massachusetts.

*Objectives:* To (1) acquire basic habits of reading widely for pleasure and for information, (2) relate the process of reading to content, and (3) increase vocabulary through wide reading, study, and use of media.

*Project:* Centered in the school library, this project involves students in individual and small group activity, as well as working in pairs. Creative activities include storytelling, utilization of sound filmstrips and tapes, and picture book activities. Library staff and older children are used in the storytelling activity. Instructional resources are used for specific and defined purposes within a series of activities whether assigned or

### *Media Services in Schools*

initiated by pupils. Materials have been carefully previewed or examined by teachers to be sure that they will fit needs that arise or are stimulated by classroom instruction. The program is intended to recognize many different purposes and needs in reading and learning. Content of reading materials follows, as far as possible, the interests of the pupil. However, this is combined with efforts both in the classroom and library to introduce new interests and ideas.

*Number of pupils served:* Forty public elementary school pupils.

*Amount and type of Title II grant:* Special purpose grant, \$1,000.

*Evaluation:* Pretesting and posttesting, using the Vocal Encoding Subtest of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Ability; teacher judgment of improvement in vocabulary, listening, communication, and reading readiness skills; and increased interest in books and the reading process.

*Further information:* Gertrude Bailey, Principal, Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, 300 Chelmsford St., Lowell, Mass. 01851.

The evaluation techniques employed in the projects are widely varied both in methodology and in level of sophistication. The following one from Wellsville, Kansas, uses Kansas University evaluation specialists for the evaluation process.

*Title:* Using Library Materials to Improve Social Studies Reading Skills, Wellsville High School, Wellsville, Kansas.

*Objectives:* To (1) improve reading comprehension and speed, vocabulary, and word analysis skills; (2) improve vocabulary in the area of social studies; and (3) develop the ability to use maps and charts to derive information.

*Project:* Seventeen seventh grade pupils identified as problem readers are being taught social studies and reading with procedures calling for intensive use of print and audiovisual media. Special attention is given to skills needed for reading for information and knowledge. These include learning to identify and understand the meaning of words, selecting and organizing information, interpreting information, and use of information. To develop these skills, pupils will be taught the use of library reference materials; techniques of selecting significant ideas; skimming, outlining, and notetaking; skill in judging the authoritativeness of sources and evaluation of information; how to generalize and draw conclusions; and how to relate facts to other situations. Extensive use is made of the materials selected especially for this project.

*Number of pupils served:* Seventeen public school pupils.



MARY HELEN MAHAR

*Amount and type of Title II grant:* Special pupose grant, \$3,000; basic grant, \$588.

*Other federal program assistance:* ESEA Title I funds, \$12,826; and NDEA Title III matching funds for materials and equipment.

*Evaluation:* Pretesting and posttesting of reading and study skills and comparison with control group; student and teacher "opinionnaire"; judgment of Kansas University consultants.

*Further information:* Lois Adriance, Librarian, Wellsville High School, Wellsville, Kansas 66092.

Copies of issues of *ESEA Title II and the Right to Read, Notable Reading Projects*<sup>11</sup> can be obtained on request to Milbrey L. Jones, Bureau of Libraries and Learning Resources, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202.

There have been a few fairly ambitious evaluation projects of media services in individual schools of the United States. One of them is well known—that of Sobrante Park School in Oakland, California. It is described in *An Evaluation Report on the Multi-Media Services Project: Sobrante Park School*,<sup>12</sup> published by Oakland Public Schools. It has some evidence of positive effects on children and teachers through the services of the media center in the processes of learning and teaching. It points to a number of inferences from these effects which require further research. A study of the methodology and instruments used in this survey can be profitable in the planning of a media program evaluation.

EVALUATION OF MEDIA SERVICES BY STATE DEPARTMENTS OF  
EDUCATION

State departments of education have also been conducting evaluation surveys of school media surveys in their states, or making plans to do so. The California State Department of Education has produced *An Instrument for the Qualitative Evaluation of Media Programs in California*.<sup>13</sup> It provides for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data of media services in schools of the state. The section on qualitative evaluation needs further development, but the publication can be useful in suggesting the preparation of similar instruments for state evaluation of media programs. For states which have never compiled basic data on school media centers, a good model for a first status study is *School Libraries in Missouri, a Status Report*.<sup>14</sup> The data are described with clarity and precision, and the information provided is basic to a future qualitative evaluation.



### *Media Services in Schools*

Most state departments of education have plans for evaluation described in a document required for the ESEA Title II program, *Program and Operational Procedures (POP)*. A POP document may include the state's plan for assessment of need, the development of goals and performance objectives, as well as a plan for statewide evaluation. These POP documents can be made available on request to the state ESEA Title II coordinators in state departments of education.

Evaluation is an exacting task. It requires generous resources of time and financial support. It also requires the services of experts in evaluation—even very modest evaluative surveys must employ reliable instruments and techniques. Careful planning of the whole process in the light of both program objectives and aims of the evaluation is essential. It necessitates the involvement of staff close to programs and others who can bring objectivity to the survey. In the field of media services, evaluation, however complex, is greatly needed. To develop these services for the best possible effects on education, many assumptions related to media programs and management should be tested. Through the conduct of in-depth evaluations, we will find reasons for abandoning outmoded practices, and for planning creatively for new forms of media services to education.

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